

## **XIX.III. J.C. RYLE, A MAN WHO CALLED FOR HOLINESS - The Nineteenth Century (pt.3)**

### **Q. ARE YOU READY FOR CHURCH HISTORY?!**

Two questions and answers:

#### **QUESTION 1. What is Church History?**

**ANSWER.** Church history is the story of how Jesus has built his church for his own glory and his peoples' good. **Matthew 16:18** "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

#### **QUESTION 2. Why should we study Church History?**

**ANSWER.** We should learn church history because it is the amazing story of Jesus conquering the nations through his Gospel. **Revelation 6:2** "[Christ] came out conquering, and to conquer."

Today we are going to look at the Nineteenth Century for the 1st time. But before we do that let's remember what we learned last time.

### **Q. Who can tell me the name of the person I taught you about last time?**

- **Everyone say, "Robert Murray M'Cheyne."**

**Q. Who can tell me something about M'Cheyne?**

### **RECAP**

In the Nineteenth Century, God used Robert Murray M'Cheyne to display the preciousness of communion with God.

Who can tell me

### **NINETEENTH CENTURY (pt.2) MEMORY VERSE.**

- "I rise before dawn and cry for help; I hope in your words." (**Psalm 119:147**)

### **NINETEENTH CENTURY (pt.2) MEMORY QUOTE.**

- "I love the word of God, and find it the sweetest nourishment to my soul" (**Robert Murray M'Cheyne**).

Now, today I am going to teach you about the Nineteenth Century PART 3 (1,800-1,900).

What happened in the Nineteenth Century (1,800-1,900) that shows us how Christ built His church as He continued to conquer the nations?

## HISTORY

**(i)** John Charles Ryle was born on May 10, 1816, at Park House in Macclesfield, Cheshire, England, the eldest son of John Ryle, a wealthy private banker, Member of Parliament, and nominal Anglican, into a prosperous but spiritually indifferent home. **RYLE WAS BORN INTO WEALTH WITHOUT VITAL FAITH.**

- Everyone say, "Ryle grew up in a house of silver spoons but no saving grace." (Murray, Prepared to Stand Alone, 2016)

**(ii)** As a youth he excelled academically and athletically, attending Eton College from 1828 where he shone in cricket and rowing, then Christ Church, Oxford from 1834 to 1838, earning honors yet living without true religion until a profound conversion late in 1837 or early 1838, triggered by hearing Romans 8 read in church and realizing his need for personal faith in Christ. **RYLE WAS CONVERTED BY THE POWER OF SCRIPTURE.**

- Everyone say, "Ryle's heart was changed in his final Oxford term." (Ryle's autobiographical notes; Desiring God 2012)

**(iii)** His father's sudden bankruptcy in 1841 destroyed the family fortune and dashed Ryle's hopes for a parliamentary career, compelling him—reluctantly at first—to seek ordination in the Church of England for a livelihood; he was ordained deacon and priest by Bishop Charles Sumner of Winchester in December 1841.

**RYLE ENTERED MINISTRY THROUGH FINANCIAL RUIN.**

- Everyone say, "Bankruptcy drove Ryle to the pulpit God had prepared." (Murray 2016)

**(iv)** His first curacy was at Exbury, Hampshire (1841–1843), but illness forced a break; in 1843 he became rector of St. Thomas' Church, Winchester, where he built a reputation as an energetic evangelical pastor preaching plain, biblical truth to working people. **RYLE BEGAN AS A COUNTRY PASTOR.**

- Everyone say, "Ryle preached Christ plainly to plain folk." (Rylequotes.org biography)

**(v)** In 1844 he married Matilda Charlotte Louisa Plumptre; they had a daughter, but she died in 1847 after childbirth complications; he remarried Jessie Elizabeth Walker in 1850 (she died in 1869), and later Henrietta (third wife, predeceased him); family sorrows deepened his pastoral empathy. **RYLE SUFFERED REPEATED BEREAVEMENT.**

- Everyone say, "Ryle knew grief yet clung to the Comforter." (Various biographical sources)

**(vi)** From 1845 he served at Helmingham, Suffolk, then from 1861 as vicar (later rector) of Stradbroke, Suffolk, for nearly 20 years, where he restored the church building, built schools, preached powerfully, and wrote prolifically—tracts, sermons, and his famous *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* (7 vols., 1856–1869), making Scripture accessible. **RYLE PASTORED LONG IN SUFFOLK AND WROTE FOR THE MASSES.**

- Everyone say, “Stradbroke became Ryle’s forge for evangelical literature.” (Banner of Truth; Crossway 2025)

**(vii)** In the 1850s–1870s he emerged as a leading evangelical voice in the Church of England, defending Protestant doctrine against Anglo-Catholic ritualism in works like *Knots Untied* (1874) and *Principles for Churchmen* (1884), while publishing *Holiness* (1877), his enduring classic on practical sanctification. **RYLE DEFENDED EVANGELICAL TRUTH AGAINST RITUALISM.**

- Everyone say, “Ryle stood firm for Scripture over ceremony.” (Desiring God; Wikipedia)

**(viii)** His tracts sold millions—“the Prince of Tract Writers”—addressing sin, assurance, and practical Christianity in clear, forceful prose that reached laborers, soldiers, and the unchurched across the British Empire. **RYLE BECAME THE PRINCE OF TRACT WRITERS.**

- Everyone say, “Ryle’s tracts carried the gospel to millions.” (Crossway 2025)

**(ix)** In 1880, at age 64—when many retired—he was appointed the first Bishop of the new Diocese of Liverpool (created from Chester), installed April 19, 1880; he built churches, schools, and mission halls in the industrial city, confirmed thousands, and led with administrative vigor and evangelical zeal. **RYLE BECAME THE FIRST BISHOP OF LIVERPOOL.**

- Everyone say, “Ryle turned Liverpool into an evangelical stronghold.” (Iain Murray biography)

**(x)** He retired March 1, 1900, due to declining health and a stroke; he died peacefully on June 10, 1900, at Lowestoft, Suffolk, aged 84, still desiring to die “in harness” for Christ; his works continue to influence global evangelicalism. **RYLE DIED IN HARNESS FOR HIS SAVIOR.**

- Everyone say, “Ryle finished well, faithful to the end.” (Banner of Truth; various sources)

**(xi)** At his death Ryle left a legacy as the “Anglican Spurgeon”—a defender of biblical evangelicalism, pioneer of popular theological writing, and model of plain, holy, Christ-centered ministry; his books like *Holiness* and expository

commentaries remain staples for pastors and believers. **RYLE'S LEGACY IS CLEAR TRUTH AND PRACTICAL HOLINESS.**

- J.I. Packer wrote: "Ryle's value... is timeless." (Faithfulness and Holiness)
  - Everyone say, "Ryle's granite faith still stands." (Eric Russell, *That Man of Granite*)

## **INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT J.C. RYLE**

- Ryle was born into considerable wealth as the eldest son of a prosperous banker and Member of Parliament, but his father's bankruptcy in 1841 stripped the family of its fortune, forcing Ryle—previously aspiring to a political career—to enter the ministry reluctantly as a means of support. — **Iain H. Murray, *J. C. Ryle: Prepared to Stand Alone* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2016), 23–29.**
- At Eton College and Christ Church, Oxford, Ryle was an outstanding athlete, captaining the university cricket team and excelling in rowing, yet he lived without personal faith until a dramatic conversion around 1837–1838, sparked by hearing Scripture and realizing his sinfulness and need for Christ. — **Murray, J. C. *Ryle*, 35–42.**
- Ryle was widowed three times: his first wife, Matilda Charlotte Louisa Plumptre, died in 1847 shortly after childbirth; his second, Jessie Elizabeth Walker, died in 1869 (or 1860 in some records); and his third, Henrietta, predeceased him in 1889—experiences that deepened his empathy in pastoral ministry. — **Eric Russell, *That Man of Granite with the Heart of a Child: The Life of J.C. Ryle* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 1996), 78–85, 112–115.**
- Known as the "Prince of Tract Writers," Ryle's simple, direct tracts sold millions of copies in the Victorian era, reaching working-class readers, soldiers, and the unchurched across the British Empire with plain gospel messages on sin, assurance, and holiness. — **J.I. Packer, *Faithfulness and Holiness: The Witness of J.C. Ryle: An Appreciation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2002), 15–18.**
- Ryle's writing style was deliberately plain and forceful; he studied authors like John Bunyan, Matthew Henry, William Cobbett, and even William Shakespeare for clarity, aiming to use "picked and packed words" so his sermons and books could be read aloud effectively to ordinary people. — **Murray, J. C. *Ryle*, 148–152.**
- Appointed the first Bishop of Liverpool in 1880 at age 64 (when many retired), Ryle energetically built dozens of churches, schools, and mission halls in the industrial city, confirmed thousands, and turned it into a stronghold of evangelical Anglicanism despite opposition. — **Murray, J. C. *Ryle*, 210–225.**
- Ryle was a staunch defender of Protestant evangelical doctrine against

rising Anglo-Catholic ritualism; his works like *Knots Untied* (1874) and *Principles for Churchmen* (1884) argued vigorously for Scripture, the Thirty-Nine Articles, and Reformation principles over ceremonial innovations. — **Packer, *Faithfulness and Holiness*, 45–50.**

- His classic book *Holiness* (1877) remains one of the most influential evangelical works on sanctification, emphasizing practical, scriptural growth in grace while warning against both legalism and antinomianism. — **J. C. Ryle, *Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, and Roots* (London: William Hunt, 1877; repr., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2016), preface.**
- Ryle preached with a commanding presence and warm disposition, often using illustrations, anecdotes, and direct "I" and "you" address to engage listeners; he advised preachers to use "many stories" as "windows" to let light into subjects, following Christ's example. — **J. C. Ryle, *Simplicity in Preaching* (London: William Hunt, 1882; repr. in various collections), as cited in Murray, *J. C. Ryle*, 165–170.**
- He retired in 1900 due to failing health and a stroke, dying peacefully on June 10 at age 84, still desiring to "die in harness" for Christ; his legacy endures as a model of clear, uncompromising evangelical ministry and popular theological writing. — **Murray, *J. C. Ryle*, 260–265.**

**Q.** What can we learn from J.C. Ryle?

*In the Nineteenth Century, God used J.C. Ryle to teach us that ministry should be masculine, preaching should be plain, and holiness should be hunted.*

## THEOLOGY

### I. RYLE TAUGHT US THAT *MINISTRY SHOULD BE MASCULINE*.

**Everyone say, "Ministry should be masculine."**

- **1 Timothy 4:11-12** "11 Command and teach these things. 12 Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity."

– **J.C. RYLE:**

"One plague of our age is the widespread dislike to sound doctrine. In the place of it, the idol of the day is a kind of jelly-fish Christianity—a Christianity without bone, or muscle, or power—a Christianity which is all form and no substance, all sentiment and no principle, all talk and no action. It produces what I must venture to call, if I may coin the phrase, a 'jelly-fish' Christianity in the land: that is, a Christianity

without bone, or muscle, or power. A jelly-fish, as you know, is a pretty and graceful object when it floats in the sea, contracting and expanding like a little, delicate, transparent umbrella. Yet the same jelly-fish, when cast on the shore, is a mere helpless lump, without capacity for movement, self-defence, or self-preservation. Alas! It is a vivid type of much of the religion of this day, of which the leading principle is, 'No dogma, no distinct tenets, no positive doctrine.' We have hundreds of 'jelly-fish' clergymen, who seem not to have a single bone in their body of divinity. They have not definite opinions; they belong to no school or party; they are so afraid of 'extreme views' that they have no views at all. We have thousands of 'jelly-fish' sermons preached every year, sermons without an edge, or a point, or a corner, smooth as billiard balls, awakening no sinner, and edifying no saint. And worst of all, we have myriads of 'jelly-fish' worshippers—respectable church-going people, who have no distinct and definite views about any point in theology. They cannot discern things that differ, any more than colour-blind people can distinguish colours. They think everybody is right—and nobody is wrong, everything is true—and nothing is false, all sermons are good—and none are bad, every clergyman is sound—and none unsound. They are 'tossed to and fro, like children, by every wind of doctrine'; ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth; ever ready for new things, because they have no firm grasp on the old."

— J. C. Ryle, *Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, and Roots* (London: William Hunt and Company, 1877), 416–419

## II. RYLE TAUGHT US THAT *PREACHING* SHOULD BE *PLAIN*.

**Everyone say, "Preaching should be plain."**

- **2 Timothy 4:2** "Preach the word; . . .reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching."
- **J.C. RYLE:** "To attain simplicity in preaching is of the utmost importance to every minister who wishes to be useful to souls. Unless you are simple in your sermons you will never be understood, and unless you are understood you cannot do good to those who hear you." — J. C. Ryle, *Simplicity in Preaching, Banner of Truth Booklet* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2010), 1.
- **J.C. RYLE:** "All the simplicity in the world can do no good, unless you preach the simple gospel of Jesus Christ so fully and clearly that everybody can understand it. If 'Christ crucified' has not His rightful place in your sermons, and sin is not exposed as it should

be, and your people are not plainly told what they ought to believe, and be, and do—your preaching is of no use!" — **Ibid**

- **J.C. RYLE:** "Of course the first object of a minister should be to preach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but 'the truth as it is in Jesus.' But the next thing he ought to aim at is, that his sermon may be understood; and it will not be understood by most of his hearers if it is not simple." — **Ibid**
- **J.C. RYLE:** "To attain simplicity in preaching is by no means an easy matter. I fear a vast proportion of what we preach is not understood by our listeners anymore than if it were Greek." — **Ibid**

### **III. RYLE TAUGHT US THAT *HOLINESS* SHOULD BE HUNTED.**

**Everyone say, "Holiness should be hunted!"**

- **Hebrews 12:14** "Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord."
- **J.C. RYLE:** "We must be holy, because this is the only sound evidence that we have a saving faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." — **J. C. Ryle, *Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, and Roots*, Banner of Truth ed. (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2001), 38–39.**
- **J.C. RYLE:** "Holiness is the habit of being of one mind with God, according as we find His mind described in Scripture. It is the habit of agreeing in God's judgment, hating what He hates, loving what He loves, and measuring everything in this world by the standard of His Word. He who most entirely agrees with God, he is the most holy man." — **Ibid**
- **J.C. RYLE:** "True holiness does not consist merely of believing and feeling, but of doing and bearing, and a practical exhibition of active and passive grace. It is something of 'the image of Christ' which can be seen and observed by others in our private life, and habits, and character, and doings" (Romans 8:29). — **Ibid**
- **J.C. RYLE:** "Necessity is laid upon us. We must fight. There are no promises in the Lord Jesus Christ's epistles to the seven churches, except to those who 'overcome.' Where there is grace, there will be conflict. The believer is a soldier. There is no holiness without a warfare." — **Ibid**

### **RECAP**

*In the Nineteenth Century, God used J.C. Ryle to teach us that ministry should be masculine, preaching should be plain, and holiness should be hunted.*

### **NINETEENTH CENTURY (pt.3) MEMORY VERSE.**

- "Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord" (**Hebrews 12:14**).

### **NINETEENTH CENTURY (pt.3) MEMORY QUOTE.**

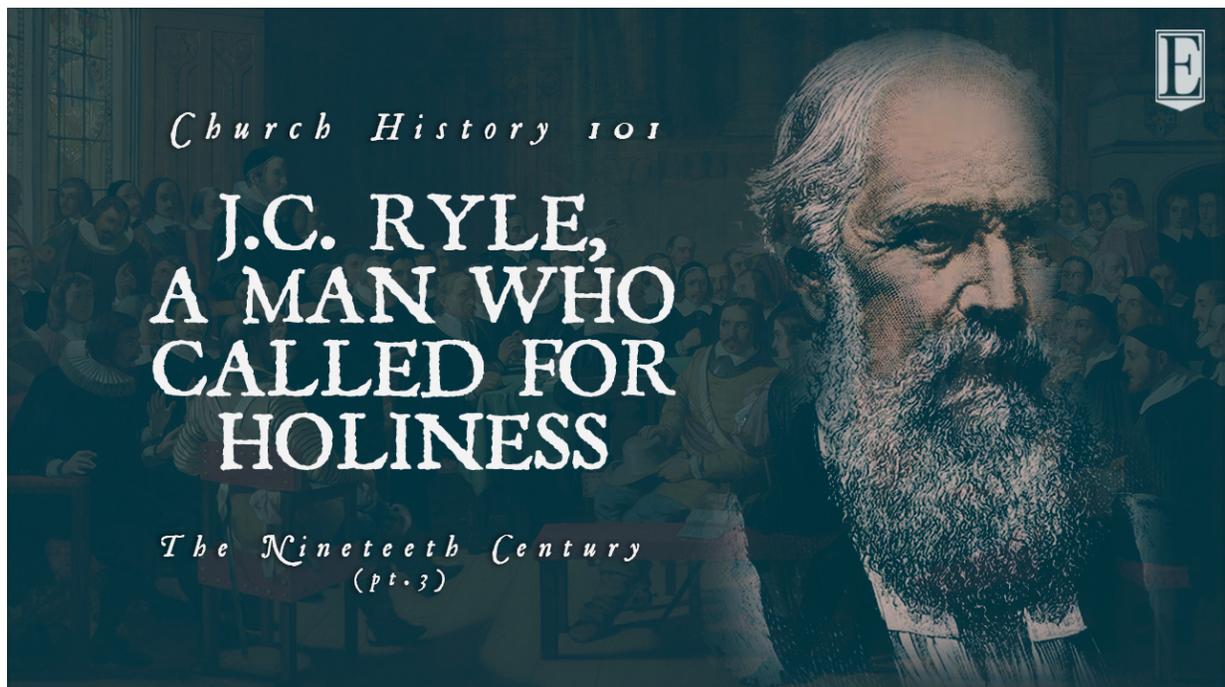
- "We must be holy, because this is the only sound evidence that we have a saving faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" (**J.C. Ryle**).

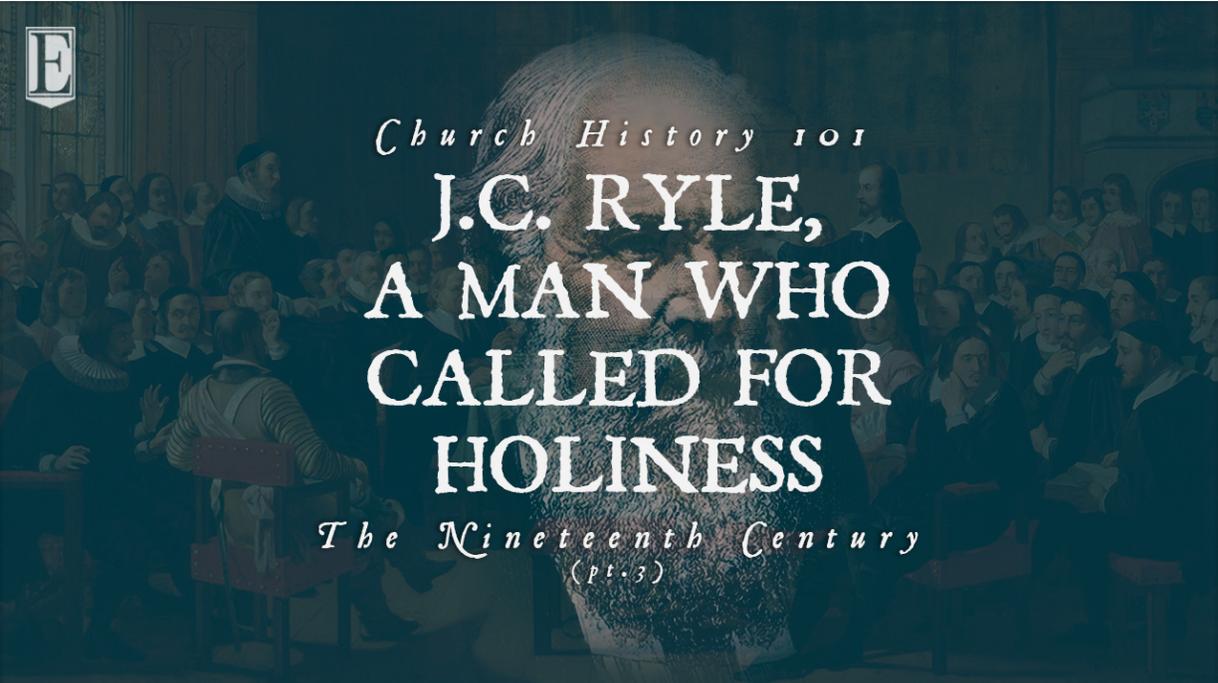
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### **FOR FURTHER STUDY**

- *The Life and Ministry of J.C. Ryle with Iain H. Murray, author of biography Prepared to Stand Alone*
- "The Frank and Manly Mr. Ryle" — The Value of a Masculine Ministry - John Piper

### **IMAGE**





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## **J.C. Ryle, A Man who Called for Holiness - The Nineteenth Century (pt.3)**

In an age of theological compromise, ritualistic innovation, and widespread nominal religion within the Church of England, Christ raised up John Charles Ryle, a plain-spoken evangelical preacher, tract writer, and bishop whose ministry modeled masculine leadership, plain preaching, and the relentless pursuit of holiness. Through Ryle's faithful exposition of Scripture, his defense of Protestant truth, and his practical writings on sanctification, Christ strengthened His church and equipped believers to live distinctly for His glory.

### **John Charles Ryle: A Plain Preacher of Solid Truth**

John Charles Ryle was born on May 10, 1816, at Park House in Macclesfield, Cheshire, England, the eldest son of John Ryle, a wealthy private banker, Member of Parliament, and nominal Anglican, into a prosperous but spiritually indifferent home (Murray 2016, 23–29). Ryle grew up in a house of silver spoons but no saving grace. As a youth he excelled academically and athletically, attending Eton College from 1828 where he shone in cricket and rowing, then Christ Church, Oxford from 1834 to 1838, earning honors yet living without true religion until a profound conversion late in 1837 or early 1838, triggered by hearing Romans 8 read in church and realizing his need for personal faith in Christ (Murray 2016, 35–42). Ryle's heart was changed in his final Oxford term.

His father's sudden bankruptcy in 1841 destroyed the family fortune and dashed Ryle's hopes for a parliamentary career, compelling him—reluctantly at first—to

seek ordination in the Church of England for a livelihood; he was ordained deacon and priest by Bishop Charles Sumner of Winchester in December 1841 (Murray 2016, 45–48). Ryle entered ministry through financial ruin. His first curacy was at Exbury, Hampshire (1841–1843), but illness forced a break; in 1843 he became rector of St. Thomas' Church, Winchester, where he built a reputation as an energetic evangelical pastor preaching plain, biblical truth to working people (Murray 2016, 56–62). Ryle began as a country pastor.

From 1845 he served at Helmingham, Suffolk, then from 1861 as vicar (later rector) of Stradbroke, Suffolk, for nearly twenty years, where he restored the church building, built schools, preached powerfully, and wrote prolifically—tracts, sermons, and his famous *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* (7 vols., 1856–1869), making Scripture accessible (Murray 2016, 78–89). Ryle pastored long in Suffolk and wrote for the masses. In the 1850s–1870s he emerged as a leading evangelical voice in the Church of England, defending Protestant doctrine against Anglo-Catholic ritualism in works like *Knots Untied* (1874) and *Principles for Churchmen* (1884), while publishing *Holiness* (1877), his enduring classic on practical sanctification (Murray 2016, 112–134). Ryle defended evangelical truth against ritualism.

Known as the "Prince of Tract Writers," Ryle's simple, direct tracts sold millions of copies in the Victorian era, reaching working-class readers, soldiers, and the unchurched across the British Empire with plain gospel messages on sin, assurance, and holiness (Packer 2002, 15–18). Ryle became the Prince of Tract Writers. In 1880, at age sixty-four—when many retired—he was appointed the first Bishop of the new Diocese of Liverpool (created from Chester), installed April 19, 1880; he built churches, schools, and mission halls in the industrial city, confirmed thousands, and led with administrative vigor and evangelical zeal (Murray 2016, 210–225). Ryle became the first Bishop of Liverpool.

He retired March 1, 1900, due to declining health and a stroke; he died peacefully on June 10, 1900, at Lowestoft, Suffolk, aged eighty-four, still desiring to die "in harness" for Christ; his works continue to influence global evangelicalism (Murray 2016, 260–265). Ryle died in harness for his Savior. At his death Ryle left a legacy as the "Anglican Spurgeon"—a defender of biblical evangelicalism, pioneer of popular theological writing, and model of plain, holy, Christ-centered ministry; his books like *Holiness* and expository commentaries remain staples for pastors and believers (Packer 2002, 45–50). Ryle's legacy is clear truth and practical holiness. J. I. Packer wrote: "Ryle's value... is timeless" (Packer 2002, preface).

### **Theological Lessons from J. C. Ryle**

J. C. Ryle's life teaches three enduring lessons for Christ's church.

**First, Ryle taught us that ministry should be masculine.** He warned against a weak, sentimental Christianity: "One plague of our age is the widespread dislike to sound doctrine. In the place of it, the idol of the day is a kind of jelly-fish Christianity—a Christianity without bone, or muscle, or power—a Christianity which

is all form and no substance, all sentiment and no principle, all talk and no action" (Ryle 1877, 416–419). Ministry must be marked by courage, clarity, and conviction, as the apostle Paul charged Timothy to command and teach with authority (1 Timothy 4:11–12).

**Second, Ryle taught us that preaching should be plain.** He insisted: "To attain simplicity in preaching is of the utmost importance to every minister who wishes to be useful to souls. Unless you are simple in your sermons you will never be understood, and unless you are understood you cannot do good to those who hear you" (Ryle 2010, 1). He continued: "All the simplicity in the world can do no good, unless you preach the simple gospel of Jesus Christ so fully and clearly that everybody can understand it" (Ryle 2010, 5). And again: "Of course the first object of a minister should be to preach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but 'the truth as it is in Jesus.' But the next thing he ought to aim at is, that his sermon may be understood; and it will not be understood by most of his hearers if it is not simple" (Ryle 2010, 8). Ryle followed the apostolic pattern: "Preach the word" (2 Timothy 4:2).

**Third, Ryle taught us that holiness should be hunted.** He declared: "We must be holy, because this is the only sound evidence that we have a saving faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ryle 2001, 38–39). He explained: "Holiness is the habit of being of one mind with God, according as we find His mind described in Scripture. It is the habit of agreeing in God's judgment, hating what He hates, loving what He loves, and measuring everything in this world by the standard of His Word. He who most entirely agrees with God, he is the most holy man" (Ryle 2001, 45). And further: "True holiness does not consist merely of believing and feeling, but of doing and bearing, and a practical exhibition of active and passive grace. It is something of 'the image of Christ' which can be seen and observed by others in our private life, and habits, and character, and doings" (Romans 8:29) (Ryle 2001, 56). Finally: "Necessity is laid upon us. We must fight. There are no promises in the Lord Jesus Christ's epistles to the seven churches, except to those who 'overcome.' Where there is grace, there will be conflict. The believer is a soldier. There is no holiness without a warfare" (Ryle 2001, 67). Holiness is to be pursued with relentless effort.

### **Conclusion: Christ's Victory in the Nineteenth Century**

In the nineteenth century, God used J. C. Ryle to teach us that ministry should be masculine, preaching should be plain, and holiness should be hunted. Though born into wealth, bankrupted, and thrust into ministry, Ryle became a plain preacher of solid truth, a defender of Protestant doctrine, and a model of practical holiness. His tracts reached millions, his *Expository Thoughts* opened the Gospels to ordinary readers, and his episcopate in Liverpool turned an industrial city into an evangelical stronghold. As Iain H. Murray concluded, "Ryle's granite faith still stands" (Murray 2016, 265).

Let us learn from Ryle: lead with masculine courage, preach with plain clarity, and hunt holiness with unrelenting zeal. May we, like him, stand firm in the truth,

proclaim Christ boldly, and live for the glory of God. Christ is still building His church. He is still conquering the nations. Let us live boldly, knowing His kingdom advances, unstoppable, until it fills the earth. Amen.

### **Bibliography**

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